

AT&T Stockpiling More 700 MHz Spectrum Threatens Interoperability

AT&T Mobility since its T-Mobile merger was shot down is attempting smaller spectrum acquisition deals like the one they had with Qualcomm that was approved. Despite AT&T losing some AWS spectrum to T-Mobile as part of the breakup agreement they gained some licenses to 700 MHz airwaves from Qualcomm and now want more from 700 MHz LLC even if threatens any future hope of 4G LTE Interoperability (700 MHz Interoperability 12-69). To submit non-docketed comments/pleadings or confidential pleadings to the FCC regarding this application groups or individuals participating must have registered with the FCC to participate in Universal Licensing System proceedings. Once logged in a pleading for ULS File Number 0005262760 which is the file number associated with this application can be submitted. Petitions to Deny this application are due by July 25th, 2012 with Oppositions due August 6th, 2012 and Replies due August 13th, 2012. I have already participated in this proceeding myself submitting my concerns stating why the deal should either be conditionally approved or denied. As it is much smaller than AT&T T-Mobile merger and is purely a spectrum swap there are less competitive concerns than there were for that proposed merger but some concerns do exist that need addressing.

As noted above the transaction(s) at issue here could further derail or threaten any future hope for 4G LTE device carrier interoperability among carriers offering 4G LTE services and as such the FCC should carefully review and evaluate all the evidence submitted for or against the transaction(s) at issue here. The FCC as I will explain in an upcoming article should implement and enforce 700 MHz interoperability rules which will benefit smaller carriers and foster greater competition. This is because the Big 2 carriers AT&T and Verizon have benefited from a non interoperable wireless market even making devices on their own networks incompatible with each other's network. So not only are devices on AT&T's network incompatible with those of smaller carriers including Sprint Nextel, T-Mobile USA, MetroPCS, Leap Wireless (Cricket), U.S. Cellular, C-Spire (Cellular South) etc but devices on AT&T's network are also incompatible with those on Verizon's network and vice versa.